

Message Text

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ACTION SIG-02

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /003 W
-----108396 151123Z /15 C
R 151026Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9610

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FOR INSPECTOR GENERAL FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ASIG, SA
SUBJECT: EVALUATION OF THE CONSULAR FUNCTION

REF: STATE 208067

EMBASSY SUBMITS FOLLOWING COMMENTS IN REPLY TO REFTEL.
COMMENTS ARE NUMBERED IN SAME ORDER AS QUESTIONS.

1. CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO WAIVER OF VISAS FOR CERTAIN COUNTRIES. MANY EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAVE USED SUCH A SYSTEM FOR YEARS. OF COURSE, THE U.S. WOULD NEED SUFFICIENT INTERNAL CONTROLS TO PREVENT PERSONS FROM WORKING ILLEGALLY, THE INTERNAL CONTROLS IN FRANCE, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN SUCH A POLICY. FRICTION WOULD BE CREATED IF AUTHORITY TO WAIVE VISAS WAS GRANTED FOR ONE COUNTRY AND NOT FOR A NEIGHBORING COUNTRY. LEGISLATIVE REFORM SHOULD LOOK TOWARD SOME SIMPLIFICATION OF THE MYRIAD VISA TYPES WE NOW ISSUE.

2. WE DEFINITELY DO NOT HAVE ADEQUATE CONSULAR PERSONNEL RESOURCES IN SAUDI ARABIA. WE NOW HAVE TWO FSO'S AND FOUR FSL'S IN JIDDA. WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO INCREASE TO THREE FSO'S AND SIX FSL'S IN JIDDA, AND ONE FSO AND TWO

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FSL'S IN RIYADH, BY NEXT YEAR. THIS INCREASE IS MANDATORY IF WE ARE TO PROVIDE THE KIND OF SERVICE WE SHOULD. THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD END THE PRACTICE OF USING TWO AND THREE MONTH STAFFING GAPS TO COVER PERSONNEL SHORTCOMINGS. BOTH OFFICER AND LOCAL PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN LACKING IN NECESSARY QUALIFICATIONS. OFFICERS HAVE LACKED EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND SAUDI ARABIA, AND THE

ABILITY TO SPEAK ARABIC. THE LAST IS ESPECIALLY CRIPPLING. IT IS DIFFICULT TO RECRUIT HIGH QUALITY LOCAL PERSONNEL. SUCH PERSONNEL AS ARE AVAILABLE ARE FREQUENTLY FROM THIRD COUNTRIES AND DO NOT KNOW THE LOCAL LANGUAGE. THE DEPARTMENT WAGE SCALE USUALLY LAGS BEHIND THE LOCAL WAGE SCALE.

3. FUNDING FOR CONSULAR NEEDS IS ADEQUATE.

4. I HAVE INSTRUCTED THAT OUR CONSULAR SECTION IN THE FUTURE HAVE HIGH PRIORITY IN THE ALLOCATION OF THE EMBASSY'S RESOURCES. IN ADDITION, I, TOGETHER WITH THE DCM, HAVE PERSONALLY ASSISTED THE CONSULAR SECTION IN SEVERAL CONSULAR TASKS, ESPECIALLY IN CONFERRING WITH THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR ON ARREST CASES. THEREFORE, I WOULD REJECT THE STATED CRITICISM. HOWEVER, JIDDA'S CONSULAR OFFICERS STILL FEEL LIKE SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS AS A RESULT OF LIMITED TRAINING AND PROMOTION OPPORTUNITIES.

5. ALTHOUGH IN THE PAST THE CONSULAR SECTION HAS BEEN LEFT OUT OF MOST POLICY ASSESSMENTS, THE LAST SIX MONTHS HAVE SEEN THEM BROUGHT INTO FORMAL ASSESSMENTS, SUCH AS THE PARM. IN THE FUTURE THE CONSULAR SECTION WILL BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH EXERCISES.

6. WE HOPE TO HAVE A FULL SERVICE CONSULAR POST IN RIYADH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN APPROXIMATELY ONE YEAR'S TIME. WHEN A CONSULATE OPENS IN RIYADH, THE NUMBER AND LOCATION OF CONSULAR POSTS WILL BE ADEQUATE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

7. DEPARTMENTAL BACKSTOPPING IS GENERALLY ADEQUATE.

8. OFFICE SPACE IS INADEQUATE. HOWEVER, AN EXPANSION PROGRAM RECOMMENDED BY THE INSPECTORS IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION WHICH SHOULD BE COMPLETED WITHIN TWO MONTHS. THE CONSULAR SECTION IS LOCATED IN A SEPARATE BUILDING DUE TO SPACE LIMITATIONS IN THE MAIN EMBASSY BUILDING.

9. CONSULAR OFFICERS ARE AWARE OF RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER FOI AND PRIVACY ACT. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THEY FEEL INHIBITED BY THE PRIVACY ACT SINCE INFORMATION IN CONSULAR FILES WAS ALWAYS ALWAYS TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY IN THE PAST. OF COURSE, UNDER FOI ACT, OFFICERS MUST EDIT THEIR WRITING MORE CAREFULLY SINCE ANY COMMENTS THEY MAKE IN THE FILE MIGHT BE READ BY A CONCERNED INDIVIDUAL AT A LATER DATE. HOWEVER, THIS HAS NOT AFFECTED THE WORK PERFORMANCE OF THE CONSULAR OFFICERS.

10. THE VOLUME OF WORK IS EXPECTED TO INCREASE SHARPLY UPWARD FOR BOTH USC SERVICES AND VISA WORK. THE EMBASSY HAS REQUESTED ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL TO MEET THE NEW WORK-LOAD, AND OFFICE SPACE IS BEING EXPANDED.

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11. CONSULAR PACKAGE STATISTICS ARE A USEFUL TOOL IF PROPERLY USED. HOWEVER, THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD GUARD AGAINST MAKING COMPARISONS BETWEEN POSTS BASED SOLELY ON STATISTICS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE POST WITH A LOW INCIDENCE OF VISA FRAUD WILL APPEAR MORE EFFICIENT THAN THE HIGH FRAUD POST TRYING TO DO THE JOB WITH THE SAME HUMAN RESOURCES. SCS WORK IS MUCH MORE COMPLEX AND INVOLVES A GREAT DEAL MORE WORK AND MAN-HOURS IN JIDDA THAN A SOPHISTICATED EUROPEAN POST. LOCAL RED TAPE AND BUREAUCRATIC INEFFICIENCY RESULT IN A LOSS OF CONSULAR EFFICIENCY. ALSO, THE QUALITY OF LOCAL HIRES WILLING TO WORK FOR OUR WAGE SCALE IS SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT BETWEEN POSTS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN JIDDA, ALL FSL POSITIONS ARE THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS. THEIR QUALIFICATIONS ARE NOT AS HIGH AS FSL'S IN A HIGHLY DEVELOPED COUNTRY. PROTECTION AND WELFARE WORK IS DIFFICULT TO QUANTIFY FOR STATISTICAL PURPOSES. ONE CASE MIGHT REQUIRE A TELEPHONE CALL TO SOLVE WHILE ANOTHER REQUIRES ONE-MAN DAY.

12. CONSULAR OFFICERS DO NOT RECEIVE ADEQUATE COOPERATION FROM LOCAL AUTHORITIES. HOWEVER, THIS IS NOT WILLFUL ON THEIR PART BUT RESULTS FROM A VERY INEFFICIENT INFRASTRUCTURE. DIPLOMATIC NOTES ARE ALMOST NEVER ANSWERED BY SAG. WE ARE NOT INFORMED OF USC ARREST CASES. THE EMBASSY IS NOW ATTEMPTING TO
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IMPROVE COOPERATION THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF BETTER PERSONAL CONTACTS BETWEEN EMBASSY PERSONNEL AND KEY SAUDI OFFICIALS, BUT THIS TAKES TIME.

13. CONSULAR OPERATIONS HAVE CAUSED BILATERAL PROBLEMS IN THE PAST, ESPECIALLY THE SHIFT IN USG POLICY FROM A-2 TO F-1 VISAS FOR STUDENTS. WE ARE STILL FEELING THE LAST TREMBLES FROM THIS TRANSITION. CONSULAR OPERATIONS, EXPECIALLY CONCERNING ARREST CASES, ARE A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF PROBLEMS IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. THE LARGE POPULATION OF AMERICANS NOW IN SAUDI ARABIA HAS BOOSTED THE NUMBER OF ARREST CASES. CONSTANT LACK OF NOTIFICATION AND SAG FAILURE TO INFORM US OF EXACT CHARGES ARE IRRITANTS IN OUR RELATIONS. POSSIBLY A NEW CONSULAR CONVENTION MIGHT HELP IN THIS AREA. THIS WILL BE DISCUSSED SEPARATELY IN ANOTHER CABLE.
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